

20 TEPOZTLAN, A MEXICAN VILLAGE

361 ter regions. Therefore there are many villages, walled
away one from another by the complicated mountains
and lying one above the other on the steps of the
162 stairway. Morelos is, indeed, one of the most densely
populated states of Mexico.¹ But the population is one
of small villages; there is no town with more than ten
thousand inhabitants, and three-quarters of the people
live in villages of less than two thousand.²

• 249 The state is entirely agricultural; there is practically
423 no industry. Before the Conquest it was the seat of
175 many Indian villages; these were united in loose economic
and political federations, but each had its own
patriotism and its own communal lands. The *hacienda*
system, which had for its excuse in the north the geographic
facts of an unpopulated region with few resources of water
supply, lacked similar excuses in Morelos until the introduction
of sugar cane. Sugar cane demands the construction of irrigation
works and crushing machinery and so requires large-scale
production. Because of this (and because of the early assignment
of large groups of villages to individual conquerors as *encomiendas*),
by 1910 the *hacienda* system had developed further in Morelos
than anywhere else; indeed practically all the land belonged to
the large estates of a few individuals.³ Sugar made Morelos a

¹ In 1910, 84.7 inhabitants per square mile, and seventh in density of population among Mexican states, according to the computation from census figures of Wallace Thompson, *The People of Mexico*, p. 72.

² McBride, *Land Systems of Mexico*, p. 144.

³ McBride says that only 140 of 28,000 heads of families were individual property-holders. One large *hacendado* owned seven times as much land as there was in all the small farms (under 1,000 *hectares*), in the state (*op. cit.*, pp. 143-44).

THE VILLAGE OF TEPOZTLAN

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contributor to the wealth of Mexico, but it reduced the population to landless peonage. The revolution which began in 1910, especially in Morelos, may be regarded as the conflict between two social-economic systems: the one an ancient Indian tradition of self-sufficient and independent villages enjoying corporate land tenure, and the other a new capitalistic system of large-scale production of a money crop contributory to a world-economy. The agrarian reforms following the revolution broke up some of these estates. Others were kept together and operated by the state in an attempt to preserve the sugar plantations; but many lands where sugar was once grown have reverted to maize.

Sugar made Morelos a 175

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The northern border of Morelos lies along a part of the rampart which hems in the valley of Mexico. Going south from Mexico City, one climbs this valley wall, the Sierra of Ajusco, at an elevation of nine thousand feet above the sea. Standing upon the southern edge of the escarpment one stands also on the threshold of Morelos. There the rampart drops suddenly away into warm green valleys that go on and down one beyond the other in a maze of slighter mountains that from this eminence are no more than hills.

In each shelf or pocket of the mountains lies a village, or a cluster of villages. Close underneath the row of peaks which forms the last bulwark of the escarpment is situated Tepoztlán. This village is the

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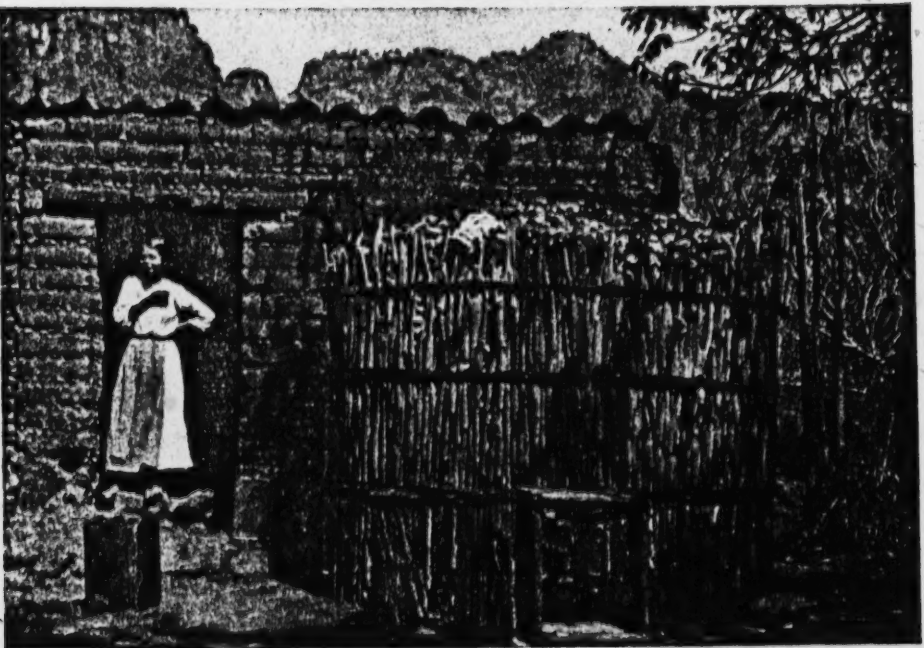
¹ This *sierra*, the southwestern margin of the *cordillera* of Ajusco, extends southeastward to the *pueblo* of Tlayacapan, Morelos. It is composed of basaltic tufa and fine volcanic ash. [35]

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251 PRESERVATION AND STORAGE OF FOOD--techniques of food preservation (e.g., drying, smoking, pickling, refrigeration, home canning); use of preservatives and special equipment; accumulation and storage of supplies and reserves; etc. Data on culturally elaborated or commercialized techniques of preservation and storage should be filed under the more specialized categories below. See also:

Granaries 343 Warehousing 488

1: Redfield E-5 (1926-1927) 1930
NU37 Tepoztlan NU37



OHUATLAPIL: HUACALES AND BOTES IN THE FOREGROUND

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THE MATERIAL CULTURE

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the house. The roof of this porch is supported by columns; there may be an arch or two. The roof may be peaked. The porch (*corredor*), and perhaps also the house, has a brick floor. There are several windows; some of these contain iron grilles. The walls are plastered and perhaps tinted.

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However mean or however important, the house is ornamented by a number of flowering plants, usually potted in oilcans, and stood outside the house on a rack.

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The tripartite house division into *sala*, kitchen and storehouse, emphasized by Bandelier² and well illustrated by Starr,³ is not always clearly marked. Sometimes the kitchen is merely a flimsy lean-to against the house, or is in a corner of the *corredor*, or is even in a corner of the single room. But more often it is a separate room or even an entirely separate structure.

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The storehouse (*S. troje*)³ is practically always present, and is usually placed immediately in front of the dwelling. It occurs in three forms, all of which are probably of entirely pre-Columbian design. The *ohuatlapil* (*N. ohuatlapilli*) is most common. This is circular, about six feet high and of varying diameter; it is made of vertical cornstalks bound together with rope. It contains maize on the cob (*S. mazorca*). Also made to contain *mazorca* is the *cincolote* (*N. zincolohili*). This is square, of poles laid horizontally, one pair upon

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¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 129.

² Frederick Starr, *Indians of Southern Mexico, An Ethnographic Album* (Chicago, 1899), Plates XLIV, XLV, XLVI, XLVII.

³ "S." indicates term used in Spanish discourse; "N." term used in Nahuatl discourse.

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251 another at right angles to the first until a structure is
 343 raised tall enough to contain the maize to be stored. The *cuezcomate* (N. *cuezcomatl*) is a vasiform granary, plastered inside and out with clay. In it is kept shelled corn.

343 Perhaps every fourth dwelling has a sweathouse (S. *temazcal*; N. *temazcalli*), well known as a part of the pre-Columbian house group. This is made of stone set in mortar. It is rectangular, approximately square, and about five feet high at the center. The roof is low peaked. The one entrance is barely large enough to permit entrance of a man on hands and knees. Al-
 [515] though occasionally now used merely to achieve clean-
 [157] liness, its use, as in pre-Columbian times, is chiefly therapeutic.

231 These are all indigenous features. Although bees and
 343 turkeys were domesticated before the Conquest, it is
 [177] not clear to what extent the beehive—a simple wooden box—and the fowlhouse preserve pre-Columbian elements. The fowlhouse (S. *gallinero*; N. *pizcalli*) is a part of nearly every domestic establishment (but in many homes some of the chickens perch on ladders in a corner of the dwelling). It is usually built of stone, to keep out marauding carnivores, and has about the size and form of the sweathouse, except that the roof is tiled. To protect a horse or *burro* a thatched or tiled roof is erected in a corner of the yard. Something in
 312 which to store water completes the house group. This
 415 is either a plastered tank (S. *pila*) or a large jar (S. *tianja*; N. *acomitl*) or merely an alcohol tin.

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252 in stone and clay. Only a small part of cookery in
[354] Tepoztlán is done on the brazier.

Most of the other articles which contribute to culinary technique are Indian, not European. The
[412] small andesite mortar (S. *molcajete*; N. *molcaxitl*) and the pestle (S. *tejolote*; N. *texolotl*) are used chiefly for grinding *chile*. Two of the three common forms of

285 basket are likewise pre-Columbian in general character. These are the forms without handles: the *chiquihuite* (N. *xiquihuitl*), which is stiff, as wide as it is deep, and coiled on splints; and the *tompia* (N. *tompia*), which is flexible, twice as deep as it is wide, and woven of soft reed. The other basket, which is of the shape of an ordinary European market basket, with a handle, has no Nahuatl name (it is always

[177] called *canasta*), and is apparently a form introduced by the Spaniards. Its principal use is in marketing; [482] therefore it is carried only by women, and on the left arm under the *rebozo*. The whole forms a *canasta-rebozo* minor complex of post-Columbian development. [562]

The other two baskets are used for the storage and
[251] transport of food (the *chiquihuite* is also used to strain [252] honey), and may be carried by either man or woman.

177 Mexican pottery has been much modified since the
323 Conquest. Many forms are European, and the ware is in general inferior. Shell-decorated Cuernavaca pottery is common in Tepoztlán, and there are occasional pieces of glazed and painted Oaxaca ware. The ware in general use in cookery is the plain ware of Toluca.

[415] The pot (S. *olla*; N. *xotli*) preserves the ancient form;

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Harvest: The harvest generally consists of two stages. The first is stripping the cornstalks of their leaves. This process is known as the *sacate* and begins in early November. The leaves are bundled and transported to the house, where they are used for fodder. Stripping a cornfield of ten or twelve *cuerillos* takes six days of work. Sometimes men will compete to see who can strip two rows in the shortest time. The *sacate* is tied into bundles or *garillas*. Twelve *garillas* make up one *manejo* and twelve *manejos* make up one *carga*. These *cargas* of *sacate* are transported home on horse or mule. The transporting of the *sacate* produced on a field of ten to twelve *cuerillos* takes three days of work, using two mules and making two trips a day. 243 [231] [461] [492]

The harvest of the corn itself begins in early December.¹¹ It takes about five days of work to pick the corn on a field of one hectare. A good worker can pick approximately two *cargas* of corn a day. The corn, like the *sacate*, is transported by mule and it takes about the same time, that is, three days. It is customary to celebrate the harvest by serving *ponche* to the helpers and to the men who are hired to transport the corn. During the harvest the wives may help in stripping the leaves off the ears of corn. These leaves are known as *sotomaskli* and are used in making tamales. Widows often ask for permission to gather corn leaves to sell. 492 [527] [252] [589]

The *cuatequil* or unpaid cooperative labor system referred to earlier is reserved exclusively for the planting, cultivation, and harvesting of the land owned by the barrio for the support of its chapel, and working the barrio land is the only occasion for unpaid collective labor in agriculture. There are cases of labor exchange between relatives, but this is viewed as very different from *cuatequil*. I should like to emphasize this point, for Tepoztecan farming is highly individualistic and in this sense quite similar to our own farming. 243 [476] [794] [621]

There is some time pressure in harvesting, in those cases in which many privately owned plots are encircled by a single fence or stone wall. The farmer who has completed his harvest is entitled to allow his animals to graze, and this endangers the corn on those fields not yet harvested. To avoid this danger and the many quarrels resulting from it, the farmers within a single enclosure generally come to some agreement to have their plots harvested within a specified time, which agreement is registered with the local authorities. Although this situation would seem to call for cooperative harvesting, each family, with the aid of hired labor, harvests its own field. 243 [231] [578] [476]

In the first few days of January most farmers begin to store the corn in the storage bins that are of two types, the *zincolotes* and the *ahualapiles*. The corn is generally stored without being shelled so that it will better resist the corn worms which are a great problem to Tepoztecan. Sometimes a considerable portion of the harvest is eaten or spoiled by these worms. It is customary in many families to leave the corn on the cob until April or May; prior to that, they shell only what they need. 251 • [136]

¹¹ Formerly stripping and harvesting were begun after the appearance of the full moon.

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243 The harvesting of corn, like all other operations in agriculture, is done on an
 476 individual family basis, with hired help if necessary. There is a minimum of labor
 114 exchange and cooperation. Our findings differ from those of Redfield. Redfield
 writes:

The men always work in groups; the owner of the field has asked them to help him—it is *cuatequil*—and then when their fields are ripe he will help them harvest. These are social occasions. Each group has *la muleta*, "the little mule"—a bottle of alcohol hidden under a pile of corn. The preparation of their dinner is also done cooperatively at the house of the owner of the field, and this is a social occasion for the women. They carry the dinner to the fields for the men. The owner of the fields supplies the food and drink. But there the cooperative harvesting ends, for the removal of the grain is done separately in each individual house, each member of the family taking a hand."

This account refers to a type of cooperation which does not now exist in Tepoztlán, and our informants did not remember its having existed in 1926 or even before the Revolution of 1910. Corn is shelled by both men and women.

243 Women generally shell corn by hand in small quantities for daily use in the house
 462 and for small-scale trade. Large-scale shelling by the *carga* is generally done by
 [412] the men who use an *elotero*, which is made of dry corncobs bound together in the
 form of a flat disc, over which the corn to be shelled is rubbed. Some use the
 [621] black volcanic rock from the *texcal* for shelling. However, the corn selected for
 seed is shelled by hand by the men. Women of the two upper barrios of San
 Pedro and Los Reyes frequently shell corn on a large scale, whereas in the larger,
 center barrios, large-scale shelling is considered a man's work. In many cases
 peones are hired for this job. The shelled corn is stored in sacks, for the most part,
 • 251 although there are still a few of the old *cuescomatl*. (See Fig. 28.) Many families
 [825] put the skeleton of a dog's head or a piece of *ocote* wood and lime in the sacks or
 [824] the *cuescomatl* to protect the corn against spoilage. Formerly when *cuescomatls*
 [788] were made, the priest would be called to bless them. There is a belief that when
 [761] a death occurs, the corn in the house or on the house site will be more subject to
 the ravages of insects.

[242] The loss of stored corn from insects is one of the serious problems faced by
 Tepoztecs. Many farmers complain that they lose a few *cargas* a year in this
 fashion. It is rare to find corn that lasts through to August without being seriously
 damaged by corn worms. Tepoztecs have still received little help with this prob-
 lem from Mexican agronomists.

243 An old tradition persists in the village to the effect that the boa constrictor was
 825 formerly used to prevent stealing of corn from the cornfields and the granary. It is
 231 said that the snake was fed salt and *sequesquite* by the owner of the field, and that
 thereafter the snake would frighten all strangers by climbing up the cornstalk
 and making a whistling noise. These snakes were apparently tame and did not
 harm the owner, but would attack strangers. There seems to have been some

²⁰ Redfield, *Tepoztlán*, pp. 126-27.



Fig. 28. The cuescomatl for storing corn.

magical qualities associated with the boa constrictor, for it was believed that a man who had tamed one would always have a good yield in his milpa, and that the seed would not be subject to insects.

YIELD

The yield of corn varies a great deal from field to field and from year to year on the same field. Table 30 shows something of this range for specific fields of varying size.

TABLE 30. Estimates of Corn Yields in Plow Culture, 1944.

Size of Milpa (Amount of Seed Planted in Cuernillos)	Yield in Ears of Corn by Carga	Yield in Shelled Corn by Carga
14.0	30.0	20.0
22.0	34.0	23.0
8.0	15.0	10.0
6.0	7.5	5.0
7.5	13.5	9.0
10.0	7.5	5.0
12.0	9.0	6.0

Judging from these figures, we would get an average production of 9.6 cargas of shelled corn a hectare. However, it is possible to arrive at a much more useful

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353 nails and now, not infrequently, on wood or wire clothes hangers purchased in Cuernavaca. Clothes closets are used only in a very few well-to-do homes in the center of the village. Food, except corn and beans, does not present a storage problem, since it is purchased in small quantities for immediate consumption. A few cans, bottles, jars, and baskets usually suffice to take care of current food. But the more modern or acculturated the family, the greater the number of storage facilities.

251 The family supply of corn presents the most important storage problem. For this purpose separate structures resembling corncribs are built in the family patio. Redfield describes these as follows:

343 The storehouse (*S. troje*) is practically always present, and is usually placed immediately in front of the dwelling. It occurs in three forms, all of which are probably of entirely pre-Columbian design. The *ohuatlapil* (*N. ohnatlapilli*) is most common. This is circular, about six feet high and of varying diameter; it is made of vertical cornstalks bound together with rope. It contains maize on the cob (*S. mazorca*). Also made to contain *mazorca* is the *cincolote* (*N. zincolotli*). This is square, of poles laid horizontally, one pair upon another at right angles to the first until the structure is raised tall enough to contain the maize to be stored. The *cuezcomate* (*N. cuezcomatl*) is a vasiliform granary, plastered inside and out with clay. In it is kept shelled corn.*

[178] The *cuezcomatl* is now a rarity in Tepoztlán, since most of them have been dismantled or allowed to fall in ruin. They are considered very primitive in appearance, and the few families who still own them are not keeping them in good repair and obviously do not take pride in them, although some of them are over a hundred years old. Now shelled corn is stored inside the house in large sacks made of *petates* sewn together, in large baskets, or in burlap bags.

404 The sewing machine has, as Redfield put it, "become a part of the general Tepoztecan material culture; it is found in all parts of the village and in houses otherwise Indian in character." At present there are 215 sewing machines in Tepoztlán, owned by 25.3 per cent of the families. This is a relatively high proportion in comparison with other rural areas. The average distribution in rural areas throughout Mexico is 15.6 per 100 families; the average for both rural and urban areas in the nation is 22.5 per cent.

[556] Although sewing machines are apt to be found in the poorest homes, as well as in well-to-do homes, there is a high correlation between degree of wealth and ownership of sewing machines. We find such ownership in 76 per cent of Group III, 39 per cent of Group I-C, and 10 per cent of Groups I-A and I-B. It is interesting to note that among Groups I-A and I-B there is a considerable number of families who own no property except a sewing machine. The few wealthy families who do not have their own machines either have little need for one or have all their clothing made by a local seamstress. The 215 machines in Tepoztlán service many more than that number of families, since it is customary to lend or rent machines to relatives and neighbors, and most machines are in continuous use. Indeed, it may be said that one of the secondary but not unimportant effects of the sewing machine

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[574] * Redfield, *Tepoztlán*, pp. 33-34.